

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCI-02 SMI-01 CEQ-01 EPA-01 IO-04 FEA-01

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R 180300Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ENRG, JA

SUBJECT: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MUTSU CONTROVERSY

REF: TOKYO 13415

SUMMARY: NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIP MUTSU RETURNED TO HOME-PORT OCTOBER 15 AFTER ENFORCED 50-DAY STAY AT SEA. GOJ AGREEMENT WITH DISSIDENT FISHERMEN, WHICH CLEARED WAY FOR RETURN, INCLUDED PROMISE TO MOVE SHIP'S HOMEPORT AND TO PAY COMPENSATION AND UNDERScoreD GOVERNMENT'S VULNERABILITY ON ATOMIC ENERGY ISSUES. CONTINUING EXPLOITATION BY OPPOSITION PARTIES, PRESS COMMENTARY AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO MUTSU CONTROVERSY ALL INDICATED THAT JAPANESE "NUCLEAR ALLERGY" IS FAR FROM DISSIPATED AND THAT POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO WEIGH HEAVILY IN GOJ EFFORTS TO PROMOTE NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. DENIED ENTRY INTO PORT FOR MORE THAN 50 DAYS BECAUSE
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OF LOCAL OPPOSITION, NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIP MUTSU FINALLY

RETURNED TO AOMORI PREFECTURE HOME BASE AT MUTSU CITY ON OCTOBER 15 FOLLOWING CONCLUSION OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF GOJ AND AOMORI FEDERATION OF FISHERY COOPERATIVES. SHIP'S RETURN ENDED LATEST ROUND IN MUTSU CONTROVERSY WHICH BEGAN AUGUST 26 AS WEATHER FORCED FISHERMEN TO LIFT BLOCKADE AND VESSEL HURRIEDLY SAILED FOR HIGH SEAS TEST RUN. CONTROVERSY WAS INTENSIFIED FOUR DAYS LATER WHEN RADIATION "LEAK" WAS DETECTED. AGREEMENT REACHED AFTER WEEKS OF BARGAINING HAS GIVEN GOJ TEMPORARY - BUT ONLY TEMPORARY - RESPITE IN COPING WITH PROBLEM WHICH LONG PREDATES MUTSU'S DEPARTURE FOR OPEN WATER.

2. UNABLE TO FIND ALTERNATE PORT, ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES IN RESUPPLY, FORCED TO REMOVE BULK OF CREW BECAUSE OF UNION DEMANDS, AND CONFRONTING HEIGHTENED OPPOSITION FROM LOCAL AOMORI OFFICIALS AND FISHERMEN, GOJ FOUND ITSELF IN WEAK POSITION NEGOTIATING FOR SHIP'S RETURN. AS RESULT, AGREEMENT WITH FISHERMEN'S COOPERATIVE FEDERATION WAS ESSENTIALLY PACKAGE OF GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS. KEY POINTS OF AGREEMENT INCLUDED GOJ PROMISES TO MOVE SHIP TO NEW HOMEPORT WITHIN TWO AND A HALF YEARS AND TO PAY OUT OVER ONE BILLION YEN, IN PART AS COMPENSATION TO FISHERMEN AND IN PART TO PROMOTE FISHING INDUSTRY IN AOMORI PREFECTURE.

3. MUTSU ISSUE HAS BEEN IMPORTANT FOCAL POINT FOR PAST TWO YEARS IN BROADER CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING GOJ EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER PLAN. AT LOCAL LEVEL, DISPUTE HAS PITTED GOVERNMENT AGAINST AOMORI FISHERMEN'S GROUP, BACKED BY VARIETY OF LOCAL OFFICIALS AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS. FISHERMEN ARGUED THAT MUTSU WOULD POSE THREAT OF RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION TO SCALLOPS, INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT REVENUE SOURCE IN AREA. EVEN IF REAL THREAT WAS MINIMAL, THEY CONTENDED, POTENTIAL CONSUMERS MIGHT SHUN PRODUCT FROM WATERS WHERE MUTSU WOULD OPERATE. AS SOME PAPERS HAVE NOTED, THEY WERE ALSO WELL AWARE THAT OPPOSITION TO MUTSU MIGHT ENABLE THEM TO EXTRACT MONETARY COMPENSATION FROM GOJ - AS IT ULTIMATELY DID.

4. AT ANOTHER LEVEL, OPPOSITION PARTIES AND ALLIED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ALSO SOUGHT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MUTSU CONTROVERSY. UNLIKE AOMORI FISHERMEN, THEY HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED BY POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND HAVE PORTRAYED HANDLING OF MUTSU PROBLEM AS EVIDENCE OF GOJ DISREGARD FOR SAFETY OF CITIZENS AND OF BUREAUCRATIC BUNGLING. MOREOVER, THEY HAVE ENDEAVORED TO BLUR DISTINCTION BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, THEREBY LEAVING IMPRESSION MUTSU IS

ONE ELEMENT IN GOJ SCHEME TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR ARMS
CAPABILITY.

5. PRESS HAS FOLLOWED MUTSU-RELATED EVENTS WITH CLOSE
ATTENTION, AND AGREEMENT CLEARING WAY FOR SHIP'S RETURN
TO PORT GENERATED SUBSTANTIAL EDITORIAL COMMENT. RECURRING
THEMES HAVE INCLUDED ASSERTIONS THAT PUBLIC DOES NOT
TRUST GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS RE SAFETY OF NUCLEAR POWER
PLANTS; THAT GOJ MANAGEMENT OF NUCLEAR REACTOR DEVELOP-
MENT HAS BEEN INEFFICIENT (EXEMPLIFIED BY BICKERING
BETWEEN TRANSPORT MINISTRY AND STA) AND SHOULD BE RE-
ORGANIZED; AND THAT MUTSU PROBLEM HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS
FOR FURTHER CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. PAPERS
HAVE ALSO STRESSED FACT THAT GOVERNMENT MUST INCREASE
EFFORTS TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION OF LOCAL
RESIDENTS IF IT IS TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT PLANS FOR
PEACEFUL USE OF ATOMIC ENERGY.

6. LONG UNDER FIRE FOR HANDLING OF ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAM
AND DIRECTLY STIMULATED BY MUTSU FLAP, ON OCTOBER 16
GOJ AND LDP SPOKESMEN JOINTLY ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR RE-
FORM OF GOVERNMENT NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY. PLANS INCLUDE
TRANSFORMATION OF ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION FROM CON-
SULTATIVE BODY INTO INDEPENDENT AGENCY, CREATION OF AN
ASSOCIATED ATOMIC ENERGY SAFETY EXAMINATION COUNCIL,
AND REVAMPING OF JAPAN NUCLEAR SHIP DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.
ONE SAME DAY, PRIME MINISTER TANAKA TOLD GOVERNORS'
CONFERENCE GOJ HAD BEEN NEGLIGENT IN CONNECTION WITH
MUTSU PROBLEM. HE PLEDGED ACTION TO ENSURE TECHNICAL
SAFETY, TO GAIN PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNMENT
POLICIES, AND TO REFORM PRESENT STRUCTURE.

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCI-02 SMI-01 CEQ-01 EPA-01 IO-04 FEA-01

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7. COMMENT: WHILE GOJ MUST STILL FACE TOUGH PROBLEM OF FINDING NEW HOME PORT FOR MUTSU, WITH IMMEDIATE IMPASSE RESOLVED IT CAN REDIRECT ATTENTION TO MORE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. MUTSU ISSUE, HOWEVER, UNDERSCORES FACT THAT SO-CALLED NUCLEAR ALLERGY HAS BEEN LITTLE DISSIPATED AND THAT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AT PUBLIC EDUCATION SO FAR HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN REVERSING POPULAR ATTITUDES. SUPPORT FOR THIS CONCLUSION IS FOUND IN EXISTENCE OF ACTIVE OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS IN VICINITY OF EXISTING OR PLANNED NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. IT IS ALSO TO BE FOUND IN LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS; FOR EXAMPLE, SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE IN SEPTEMBER 9 SENDAI (KAGOSHIMA PREFECTURE) MAYORAL ELECTION WON ON BASIS OF OPPOSITION TO CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANT.

8. VIEWED IN PERSPECTIVE, PARTICULARLY IN CONTEXT OF NATIONAL ENERGY REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES, OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS WILL NOT STOP NUCLEAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN JAPAN. THEY WILL, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO IMPEDE THEM
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AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL AS TECHNICAL ONES WILL WEIGH HEAVILY IN GOVERNMENT PLANNING AND THINKING RE ATOMIC POWER. IN BROADER CONTEXT, OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO USE ALLEGED INADEQUACIES OF GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF ATOMIC POWER DEVELOPMENT AS VEHICLE FOR CRITICISM IN NATIONAL POLITICAL ARENA. IN SHORT, GOJ WILL CONTINUE TO ENCOUNTER POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN PROMOTING SPECIFIC ATOMIC ENERGY PROJECTS, AND ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAM ITSELF WILL CONTINUE TO BE POLITICAL PROBLEM. END COMMEND.
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